

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE NIACT IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 383

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EXDIS
SAN JOSE FOR AMBASSADOR FROM LAZAR
DEPARTMENT FOR CEN ACTING DIRECTOR KILDAY ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, PFTR, CS
SUBJECT: BURSTIN MEMO

REF: SAN JOSE 2637

1. BURSTIN'S REPORT OF CONVERSATION DOES INDEED GO DANGEROUSLY BEYOND MY ACTUAL REMARKS, INCLUDING ATTRIBUTING TO ME SEVERAL THINGS THAT HE SAID HIMSELF. HOPEFULLY, MY LATE NIGHT NOTES, AS SKETCHY AND DISJOINTED AS THEY WERE, WILL BE OF SOME HELP TO YOU IN DISCUSSING THIS MATTER WITH FIGUERES OR COUNTERING WHATEVER OTHER MISCHIEF BURSTIN MAY HAVE IN MIND.

2. AS TO DISTORTIONS OF SUBSTANCE, ONE HARDLY KNOWS WHERE TO START. HOWEVER, I DID NOT AUTHORIZE LUIS BURSTIN TO PASS ANY PART OF THE CONVERSATION TO FIGUERES. HE SPECIFICALLY ASKED WHETHER HE COULD PASS THE GIST OF MY REMARKS TO ODUBER AND I SAID NO, THAT OUR CONVERSATION HAD BEEN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRIENDS AS HAD OUR MANY PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS; THAT ODUBER COULD HAVE MY OPINIONS ANY TIME HE WANTED THEM BY ASKING ME FOR THEM. I DO RECALL THAT BURSTIN THEN SAID: "IN OTHER WORDS YOU DON'T WANT PEOPLE TO THINK THAT YOU ARE USING ME AS A MESSENGER", AND I SAID THAT WAS CORRECT AND THAT IN FACT I DIDN'T NEED A MESSENGER. PASSING THE CONVERSATION TO FIGUERES
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WAS NEVER REPEAT NEVER MENTIONED BY EITHER OF US.

3. THE POSSIBILITY OF A GRAVE ECONOMIC CRISIS BY THE END OF THE YEAR, TENDING TO AGGREGATE WHATEVER TRENDS MIGHT THEN EXIST TOWARDS POLITICAL DISRUPTION (NOTE SLIGHT CHANGE FROM THE BURSTIN PHRASING PARA 3 REF) WAS ONE OF SEVERAL HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS DISCUSSED. ANOTHER WAS UPTURN IN WORLD-WIDE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS TENDING TO RELIEVE SOME OF THE PRESSURES ON THE GOCR, ALTHOUGH THIS WAS ADMITTEDLY CONSIDERED LESS LIKELY. POINT IS, THIS PART OF CONVERSATION WAS IN RESPONSE TO BURSTIN'S QUESTION AS TO WHERE I SAW THINGS GOING IN COSTA RICA; MY REPLY STARTED WITH NOTION THAT: "THEY COULD GO ANYWHERE" AND PROCEEDING ALONG THE LINE OF "IF THIS HAPPENS THEN THAT MIGHT HAPPEN."

4. THE POSSIBILITY OF ARMED INTERVENTION WAS NEVER MENTIONED OR HINTED AT. AS I RECALL MEMCON NOTES ARE QUITE FULL ON THE PART OF THE DISCUSSION ALLUDED TO.

5. THE NOTION OF "A STATE OF DISORDER FOMENTED BY THE EXTREME

LEFT" WAS MENTIONED BY BURSTIN, NOT LAZAR. I REMEMBER THAT SPECIFIC BECAUSE I REMEMBER ASKING HIM WHETHER THE EXTREME RIGHT MIGHT NOT BE AS MUCH OF A THREAT AS THE LEFT. LIKEWISE, THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE GOCR AS A BOAT WITHOUT A RUDDER, ETC., WAS HIS SUMMATION OF MY DESCRIPTION OF WHAT MANY COSTA RICANS WHO HAD TALKED TO ME WERE FEELING. I MAY HAVE AGREED WITH HIS SUMMATION.

6. I DO NOT START TO UNDERSTAND WHAT KIND OF GAME BURSTIN IS PLAYING HERE, BUT HIS OBVIOUS WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE MY POTENTIAL FURTHER USEFULNESS TO HIM SUGGESTS HIGH STAKES AND POSSIBLY A NEED FOR RAPID ACTION. ALSO HIS FURNISHING COPIES OF HIS MEMO TO YOU AND ME IS VERY PUZZLING. PERHAPS IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE CHECKING AGAIN WHETHER HE HAS ALREADY GIVEN A COPY TO PEPE OR WHETHER HE INTENDS TO AWAIT OUR COMMENTS -- OR NON-COMMENT -- BEFORE DOING SO. GAWF

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